

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A semiconductor device comprising:
 - a first dielectric layer over a substrate;
 - copper (Cu) or a Cu alloy inlaid in the first dielectric layer; and
 - a composite capping layer on the inlaid Cu or Cu alloy, the composite capping
- 5 layer comprising:
 - a layer of beta (β)-tantalum (Ta) on an upper surface of the inlaid Cu or Cu alloy;
 - a layer of tantalum nitride on the layer of β -Ta; and
 - a layer of alpha (α)-Ta on the layer of tantalum nitride.
2. The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein the composite capping layer is formed in a recess in the inlaid Cu or Cu alloy such that an upper surface of the α -Ta layer is substantially coplanar with an upper surface of the first dielectric layer.
3. The semiconductor device according to claim 2, wherein:
 - the layer of β -Ta has a thickness of 25Å to 40Å;
 - the layer of tantalum nitride has a thickness of 20Å to 100Å; and
 - the layer of α -Ta has a thickness of 200Å to 500Å.
4. The semiconductor device according to claim 1, wherein:
 - the layer of β -Ta has a thickness of 25Å to 40Å ;
 - the layer of tantalum nitride has a thickness of 20Å to 100Å; and
 - the layer of α -Ta has a thickness of 200Å to 500Å.
5. The semiconductor device according to claim 3, further comprising:
 - a diffusion barrier lining and opening in the first dielectric layer; and
 - the Cu or Cu alloy on the diffusion barrier filling the opening.
6. The semiconductor device according to claim 3, further comprising:
 - a second dielectric layer over the first dielectric layer; and
 - Cu or a Cu alloy inlaid in an opening in the second dielectric layer in electrical
- contact with the upper surface of the α -Ta layer.
7. The semiconductor device according to claim 6, further comprising an α -Ta diffusion barrier lining the opening in the second dielectric layer.
8. The semiconductor device according to claim 6, wherein the opening in the second dielectric layer, is a dual damascene opening, the method comprising filling the dual

damascene opening with Cu or a Cu alloy to form an interconnect comprising a lower via in contact with an upper line.

9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising a composite capping layer on the Cu or Cu alloy filling the opening in the second dielectric layer, the composite capping layer comprising:

- 5 a layer of β -Ta on the Cu or Cu alloy;
- a layer of tantalum nitride on the layer of β -Ta; and
- a layer of α -Ta on the layer of tantalum nitride.

10. A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device, the method comprising:
forming an opening in a first dielectric layer;
filling the opening with copper (Cu) or a Cu alloy; and
10 forming a composite capping layer on the Cu or Cu alloy, the composite capping layer comprising:

- a layer of beta (β)-tantalum (Ta) on an upper surface of the Cu or Cu alloy;
- a layer of tantalum nitride on the layer of β -Ta; and
- 15 a layer of alpha (α)-Ta on the layer of tantalum nitride.

11. The method according to claim 10, comprising:
forming a recess in the upper surface of the Cu or Cu alloy before forming the composite capping layer; and
chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) after forming the composite barrier layer
20 such that an upper surface of the α -Ta layer is substantially coplanar with an upper surface of the first dielectric layer.

12. The method according to claim 11, comprising forming a diffusion barrier lining the opening before filling the opening with Cu or a Cu alloy.

13. The method according to claim 11, comprising:
forming the layer of β -Ta at a thickness of 25Å to 40Å;
forming the layer of tantalum nitride at a thickness of 20Å to 100Å; and
forming the layer of α -Ta at a thickness of 200Å to 500Å.

14. The method according to claim 10, comprising:
forming the layer of β -Ta at a thickness of 25Å to 40Å;
forming the layer of tantalum nitride at a thickness of 20Å to 100Å; and
forming the layer of α -Ta at a thickness of 200Å to 500Å.

15. The method according to claim 11, comprising depositing the β -Ta, titanium nitride and α -Ta layers by physical vapor deposition (PVD).
16. The method according to claim 11, further comprising:
forming a second dielectric layer over the first dielectric layer;
forming an opening in the second dielectric layer; and
filling the opening in the second dielectric layer with Cu or Cu alloy in electrical
5 contact with the upper surface of the α -Ta layer of the composite capping layer.
17. The method according to claim 16, comprising lining the opening in the second dielectric layer with an α -Ta diffusion barrier layer before filling the opening with Cu or Cu alloy.
18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the opening is a dual damascene opening, the method comprising filling the dual damascene opening with Cu or Cu alloy to form an interconnect comprising a lower via in contact with an upper line.
19. The method according to claim 18, further comprising forming a composite barrier layer on the Cu or Cu alloy in the opening in the second dielectric layer, the composite barrier layer comprising:
a layer of β -Ta on the Cu or Cu alloy;
5 a layer of tantalum nitride on the layer of β -Ta; and
a layer of α -Ta on the layer of tantalum nitride.